CASE HAVING SHELL MEMBERS FORMED FROM MOLDED PLASTIC SHELL PARTS AND A FABRIC COVERING

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The invention relates to a case, more particularly to a case having shell members formed from molded plastic shell parts and a fabric covering.

2. Description of the Related Art

As shown in Figure 1, a conventional case includes a pair of complementary integrally molded plastic shell members 11. Although the shell members 11 can provide adequate protection to articles inside the case against impact, the shell members 11 are heavy and increase the weight of the case considerably, thereby resulting in inconvenience during transport. Moreover, the outer appearance of the shell members is relatively monotonous since only concave or convex patterns can be formed on the outer surfaces of the shell members for aesthetic purposes. In addition, the outer surfaces of the shell members are not provided with pockets to receive small objects, such as pens, manuals, maps, etc.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Therefore, the object of the present invention is to provide a case having shell members formed from molded plastic shell parts and a fabric covering so as to overcome the aforesaid drawbacks of the prior art.

Accordingly, the case of this invention comprises a pair of shell members that cooperate to form a receiving space of the case. Each of the shell members includes a pair of upright side shell parts, a top shell part, a bottom shell part, and a fabric covering.

The side shell parts are molded integrally from plastic, are spaced apart from each other, form opposite sidewall boundaries of the receiving space, and have upper and lower sections.

The top shell part is disposed between and is connected to the upper sections of the side shell parts, and cooperates with the side shell parts to form a top wall boundary of the receiving space.

The bottom shell part is disposed between and is connected to the lower sections of the side shell parts, and cooperates with the side shell parts to form a bottom wall boundary of the receiving space.

The fabric covering has opposite edges connected respectively to the side shell parts, and extends to conceal outer surfaces of the top and bottom shell parts.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent in the following detailed description of the preferred embodiment with reference to the accompanying drawings, of which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a conventional case;

Figure 2 is a partly exploded perspective view of the preferred embodiment of a case according to the present invention;

Figure 3 is an assembled perspective view of the preferred embodiment;

Figure 4 is a front view of the preferred embodiment; and

Figure 5 is a rear view of the preferred embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring to Figures 2 to 5, the preferred embodiment of a case according to the present invention is shown to comprise a pair of shell members 2, a pull handle 4, a set of casters 6, and a retractable handle assembly 7.

The shell members 2 cooperate to form a receiving space 20 of the case. Each of the shell members 2 includes a pair of upright side shell parts 21, a top shell part 22, a bottom shell part 23, and a fabric covering 26.

The side shell parts 21 are molded integrally from plastic, are spaced apart from each other, form opposite sidewall boundaries of the receiving space 20, and have upper and lower sections.

The top shell part 22 is molded integrally from plastic, is disposed between and is connected to the upper sections of the side shell parts 21, such as with the use of stitch seams (not shown), and cooperates with the side shell parts 21 to form a top wall boundary of

the receiving space 20.

The bottom shell part 23 is molded integrally from plastic, is disposed between and is connected to the lower sections of the side shell parts 21, such as with the use of stitch seams (not shown), and cooperates with the side shell parts 21 to form a bottom wall boundary of the receiving space 20.

The fabric covering 26 has opposite edges connected respectively to the side shell parts 21, such as with the use of stitch seams (not shown), and extends to conceal outer surfaces of the top and bottom shell parts 22, 23.

Each of the side shell parts 21, the top shell part 22 and the bottom shell part 23 is angled such that the side shell parts 21, the top shell part 22 and the bottom shell part 23 cooperate to form a through hole 24 that is covered by the fabric covering 26.

It should be noted herein that it is possible to select the material, pattern and color of the fabric covering 26 so as to vary among different cases of the present invention.

The pull handle 4 is mounted fixedly on the top shell part 22 of one of the shell members 2 to facilitate moving of the case.

Each of the casters 6 is capable of 360° rotation on a horizontal plane, and is mounted on the lower section of a respective one of the side shell parts 21 of the

shell members 2.

In this embodiment, the retractable handle assembly 7 includes a guide tube unit 71 mounted fixedly on an interior side of each of the top and bottom shell parts 22, 23 of one of the shell members 2, and an extension handle member 72 extendable and retractable through the guide tube unit 71.

The fabric covering 26 of each shell member 2 has an outer surface provided with a pocket 5. Each pocket is preferably registered with the through hole 24 of the corresponding shell member 2 and is made of a fabric material such that, when an object is placed in the pocket 5, the object can be prevented from being damaged by the hard shell parts 21, 22, 23 of the shell members 2. In addition, not only does it make it easier to put in and take out objects from the pocket 5, the fabric covering 26 also provides a buffer area to minimize the presence of protruding contours at the pocket 5 when an object is received in the latter.

As shown in Figure 4, the pocket 5 on one of the shell members 2 includes an inner pocket layer 51 sewn to the fabric covering 26, and an outer pocket layer 52 that is connected to the inner pocket layer 51 through a zipper 50 and that cooperates with the inner pocket layer 51 to form a pocket space. The inner pocket layer 51 has pen sleeves 53 sewn thereon. The inner pocket layer 51 further has a stack of card retainers 54 sewn thereon.

A net layer 55 is retained on an inner surface of the outer pocket layer 52 for retaining notebooks and other miscellaneous objects. As shown in Figure 5, the pocket 5 on the other one of the shell members 2 is shown to be in the form of a pouch with a top opening. In practice, the pockets 5 on the shell members 2 can have various designs to suit different user requirements.

In sum, the case of this invention has the following advantages:

1. Instead of being formed wholly and integrally from molded plastic, the shell members of this invention are formed from interconnected side, top and bottom molded shell parts which form a through hole to reduce the total weight of the case while providing adequate strength to lateral, top and bottom sides of the case for protection of encased objects.

2. Since the sizes of each of the shell parts are relatively small in comparison to that of the shell members, smaller molds are required to fabricate the same, thereby resulting in lower costs during mass production.

3. By changing the material, pattern or color of the fabric coverings, cases that differ in appearance can be easily produced.

4. The pockets on the fabric coverings enhance utility of the case.

5. As the pockets are registered with the through holes in the shell members, the fabric coverings can provide a buffer effect for objects placed in the pockets that permits handier access to the objects and that results in a more slender appearance when the objects are placed in the pockets.

While the present invention has been described in connection with what is considered the most practical and preferred embodiment, it is understood that this invention is not limited to the disclosed embodiment but is intended to cover various arrangements included within the spirit and scope of the broadest interpretation so as to encompass all such modifications and equivalent arrangements.